

****ATTENTION****

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4/89

Gyr Falcon

Falcorustilcolus

Range:

Breeds in the arctic tundra and subarctic mountain areas of Alaska and northern Canada. Winters at the breeding grounds and in southern Canada, the northern border states of the United States, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Colorado, and California (Clark 1987).

Washington Distribution:

Winters in the irrigated regions of the Columbia Basin, and the coastal areas of western Washington, especially the northern portions of the Puget Trough (Knight 1980).

Habitat Requirements:

Gyr falcons winter near open river deltas west of the Cascades (Wahl 1972) and near open irrigated areas east of the Cascades (Knight 1980). Suitable winter habitat must be sufficiently large for the falcons to hunt and support populations of waterfowl or gallinaceous birds, their primary winter prey. This species takes its prey both on the ground and in flight (Beebe 1974). Temporary perches are sometimes used during hunting (Snow 1974).

Limiting Factors:

Presumably related to food availability during the breeding season.

Management Recommendations:

Wetlands used by gyr falcons in Washington should be protected from alterations which negatively impact prey abundance or hunting access. Maintain open river deltas in their natural condition in western Washington; maintain irrigation seepage areas that provide hunting habitat in eastern Washington.

Although specific perch and roost site characteristics have not been described for wintering gyr falcons, they are likely important. Therefore, snags, large downed logs, and other perch sites should be retained in areas where the falcons hunt.

In order to reduce accidental harassment and shooting, education programs should concentrate on teaching the public to distinguish gyr falcons from hunted avian species

References:

Beebe, F. L. 1974. Field studies of the falconiformes (vultures, eagles, hawks and falcons) of British Columbia. Occas. Papers, B. C. Prov. Mus. No. 17.

Clark, W. S. 1987. A field guide to hawks of North America. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

Knight, R. L. 1980. Gyrfalcon. Unpublished fact sheet prepared for the Washington Department of Wildlife.

Snow, C. 1974. Habitat management series for unique or endangered species. Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus* L.). USDA BLM Tach. Note Rept. No. 9

Wahl, T. R. 1972. The status of the gyrfalcon in Washington state. Unpublished letter to Washington Department of Wildlife.